

# Picture the Future



A Program Designed for  
Birthright Alumni to Engage  
With Israel and Build  
Community  
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# Introduction:

## A. Description of the topic selected:

Using the power of memory and imagery, Birthright alumni will register for an 8-week program intended to help them further unpack and make meaning of their experience in Israel. Each week, the theme of the class will vary including topics such as conversation, human dignity, humility, people, or religious identity. These different themes are chosen as a way of engaging the participants in multiple ways. They are meant to be open and broad in order for each learner to share their points of view with the class. As a set induction and starting point of interaction, participants will bring one picture they took in Israel that is reflective of each week's theme. The class will always begin with the learners expressing themselves through the picture they bring with them.

The program is designed to help participants make further meaning of and connection to their Israel trip and think more deeply about what it means to live a Jewish life. The pictures will be a starting point to each conversation. Participants will be encouraged to discuss their experiences in a safe space, ask questions and learn how others experienced similar places. Through their experiences on Birthright and 8-week follow-up conversation, they will have opportunity to consider their commitments as they go through a process of knowledge acquisition and critical reflection on their experience (Grant and Ravid, 5). Lastly, each cohort will get to know each other intimately in hopes of creating community and using one another as a resource and support each other.

## B. Identified settings conducive to the material

This unit can be taught in any kind of space that has Internet connection/WIFI since the program will include blogging and other online social networking. In an ideal setting the classroom would have a smart board where people can show their work to the entire class easily.

## C. The Rationale of the Unit

For almost twenty years Birthright Israel has sent over 300,000 participants to Israel ranging from ages 18-26. In the words of Ahad Ha'am, Israel has been, and continues to be, the place where Jews go for a source of inspiration, a destination where American Jews can grow and explore their connections. The Cohen Center at Brandeis University recently released a study showing that a majority of participants are greatly influenced by the trip and tend to lead more Jewish lives five to nine years after their return (Saxe, 1). As a result, 42% are more likely to feel more connected to Israel than non-participants and 45% are more likely to marry someone Jewish than non-participants. These results demonstrate that Birthright is influencing the next generations of Jews. However, strategies for more long-term engagement need to be implemented as well.

Technology has made it easier for participants to keep in touch with the friends they make but there is still room for more intentional and thought provoking programming that helps build Jewish identity state-side. Birthright Israel can serve as an effective catalyst for connecting with Israel but it is not enough for a life-long connection to Jewish life in general or Israel in particular.

Having a life-long meaningful connection with Israel is an integral part of the Jewish experience. It goes hand in hand with the study of Torah, God, covenant, text study and having a

well-rounded Jewish education (Horowitz, 13). I believe that it enables the possibility of having a democratic and pluralistic communal life, connects one's Jewish identity to a vibrant and complex Jewish state, and contributes to having peace among nations (Grant, Werchow and Marom, 2). It also plays an integral role in bringing together the two most populated Jewish centers in the world and bridging the gap between these two places.

Ideally, Israel education should take a systematic approach that includes both experiential and intellectual components and takes place in community (Horowitz, 4). In addition, critical reflection on one's experiences and understandings can lead to higher-order thinking in the form of a capacity to exercise judgment, which makes possible the development of commitment. I believe that that critical reflection is most effectively achieved through collaboration and open dialogue. There are some limitations to processing information alone which is why creating the space for learners to digest and articulate their experience will lead to richer and more profound ideas as a result of the dialogue process. I believe that successful outcomes of interpersonal discussions will lead individuals to feel personally responsible for the future of the Jewish people and seeks ways to act on that conviction (Grant and Ravid, 5).

An Israel experience may start with several catalyzing events or programs that should all lead to furthering one's knowledge and opportunities to engage with Israel. Israel can be a conduit for learners to engage with their Jewish practice as well. One should enhance the other. This is why it is so important that Israel education be learner based. As educators, we must create safe spaces for learners to experiment with their ideas about Israel.

Most of the formal programming on Birthright is experiential education. Participants see Israeli history and culture come to life and much of the learning has to do with the fact that participants learn with and from one another. This program will foster a safe place to learn from

one another in order to increase their collective knowledge and also reinforce the idea that the Jewish people are a collective that cares for and about the Jewish people as whole (Grant, Werchow and Marom, 5). Ideally, cultivating a community leads to a strong sense of belonging. Most Birthright alumni develop a community while in Israel. Sustaining that community for post-college age participants can be quite challenging. This program seeks to create a new community for these individuals based on their shared experiences. These relationships will lead to further conversations rooted in Israel education. Hopefully, these sessions will help them confront some of the most intimate and consequential issues and tensions in their lives.

Some of these tensions come from prior experiences. They may have learned or studied about Israel in religious school or learned about Israel through the media. What they experienced in Israel may have confirmed or conflicted with these earlier understandings. They experienced Israel for themselves and as a result are most likely coming back to North America with more knowledge and more questions. They probably heard a diverse set of opinions within their group in Israel and amongst the Israelis they met as well. For example, when participants visit Jerusalem (and other cities in Israel) they are exposed to Israel's fascinating dichotomy of religion and democracy and how they intertwine. This concept can very difficult to understand even after seeing it firsthand.

I believe that the city-based partnerships and communities that are built in North America are opportunities for learners to learn the reflective skills to think about and respond to different perspectives that deal with balancing modernity with traditionalism (Grant, Werchow and Marom, 3). Discussing the complexities that exist within Israel's society shows respect for the intelligence of travelers and increases the chance for serious engagement with Israel over time (Chazan/Lanski, 92). The schedule while in Israel is packed. They don't have enough time to

truly process and reflect on what they see and hear or how it relates to their lives. Part of having this program is that we meet weekly which means that between meetings they can think about what they learned from each other and about themselves. This program is unique in that it is city-based and will have longer lasting impact in that participants live close to each other and can more easily maintain relationships, attend similar programs activities and synagogues.

Many post Birthright programs already exist from a myriad of providers. A question that still remains is how do we, as Jewish educators engage Birthright alumni in such a way that will help them take ownership and increase their sense of belonging in order to engage them in more deeply in Jewish life. I believe that a learner-centered program will help each former participant develop their own narrative that will fuel their own rationale and life-long connection to Israel. For the participants, the program in Eretz Israel is over but the one of Am Israel has just begun.

#### **D. Intended audience for the curricular unit:**

The program will be for participants who have recently returned from Israel. Much of their knowledge, experience and memories will still be fresh in their minds. This program is meant to give participants time, knowledge, tools for reflection and most importantly a community that lives nearby in order to unpack what they're learning and create life-long friendships. It will be city-based, which means that participants that traveled to Israel together may not be in the same cohort. Each session will be one hour and fifteen minutes, every two weeks preferably within 6 months of the participants' return. Classes will target individuals ages 22-26. This will help contextualize the content in class since they are at an older stage of life. Additionally, it is easier to create a tight knit community if the individuals are approximately the same age and are beginning to settle down. Class size will be between 15-20 people.

## E. Resources for a teacher/guide

These additional resources can help guide additional discussions or ideas to think about.

### **Books:**

Cabasin, Linda, and Caroline Treffer. *Fodor's Israel*. New York: Fodor's Travel, 2011.

Grant, Lisa D., and Ezra Kopelowitz. *Israel Education Matters: A 21st Century Paradigm for Jewish Education*.

Kelner, Shaul. *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism*. New York: New York UP, 2010v

Shavit, Ari. *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*. Brunswick, Victoria: Scribe Publications, 2014.

Schwartz, Rabbi Sydney, *Jewish Megatrends: Charting the Course of the American Jewish Future*.

### **Websites & Online Articles:**

iCenter for Israel  
<http://www.theicenter.org/>

Israel 21Century  
<http://israel21c.org/>

Mako  
[Mako.co.il](http://Mako.co.il)

Haaretz  
[Haaretz.co.il](http://Haaretz.co.il)

Middle East Research Institute  
[www.memri.org](http://www.memri.org)

The Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education by Barry Chazan  
<http://www.jafi.org.il/NR/rdonlyres/2EF39A52-0622-4633-9B8F-D8870C83A204/0/Chazan.pdf>



## F. Information/skills/background needed by the teacher / guide

The preferred teacher will be a Jewish Educator who has been formally trained and has led at least one Birthright trip in the past. The educator of this program must be able to facilitate a clear understanding of why Israel education is important and must have a strong knowledge base about Judaism, Israeli culture and history. Part of helping the learner create a holistic connection to Israel means having an educator who can help in bringing ideas together.

The role of the educator is essential in producing excellent programming. Each experience must incorporate several key elements that will ensure quality outcomes that can be measured. As mentioned earlier, because Israel education seeks to promote strong identity outcomes, good Israel education is learner-centered, developmentally appropriate and involves multi-dimensional and diverse engagement with Israel in its many facets and dimensions (Horowitz, 3). This is a two-layered challenge. The first means that Israel must be taught as a multi-dimensional place with a rich and diverse history and must also reach each learner on an individual level. Helping each learner connect on a personal level will allow for a strong foundation to build on.

Secondly, educators must map out a clear and compelling conception of the role of present-day Israel in contemporary American Judaism (Horowitz, 5). The class should allot time for the learners to discover and define the significance and dynamic role of Israel in their lives. Once again, this is where community plays a crucial role. The time given to reflect and converse with other Birthright alum will help in this exploration. There is a dependence and trust that is built between the former participants.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the educators of this program must be able to facilitate a clear understanding of why Israel education is important, must have attended the

Birthright trip, and must have a strong knowledge base about Judaism, Israeli culture and history.

Part of helping the learner create a holistic connection to Israel means having an educator who can help in brining ideas together.

# Desired Results:

## a. Mission of Organization: Select Priority Goal(s) for Learners.

Learners will actively reflect on the role Israel plays in their lives and how it can be deepened.

Using the power of memory and imagery, learners will recall the experiences they had in Israel with others who have experienced the same journey in order to excite something within them.

Learners will form new relationships with others in their cohort

## b. Enduring Understanding and Essential Questions (3-5)

- Essential Questions:
  - Where do I fit in the Jewish narrative?
  - How does my trip to Israel inspire and challenge me to live a Jewish life?
  - How do I continue my Jewish practice when I'm not in Israel?
  - Who is in my Jewish community?

### Enduring Understandings:

- A post Birthright Jewish educational experience helps create an environment for expressing and developing identification and deepening emotional relationship with Israel.
- Storytelling and discussion helps to strengthen connections to Israel, Judaism, and the Jewish People.

### KDBB:

KNOW- Learners will learn about different values that surface while having deep conversations with their peers about complex issues surrounding their experience in Israel.

DO- Using memories, stories and experiences from their Birthright trip in Israel, learners will create personal narratives that will help them to reflect on what Judaism, Jewish life and Jewish Peoplehood mean to them.

BELIEVE- Learners will see the value and strength of being in a Jewish community that can bring meaning into their lives.

BELONG- Learners will have the opportunity to meet and get to know other Birthright participants in a safe space where they can express and develop their thought, ideas and personal narratives.

## 3. Evidence of Learning

The learners will be assessed at the end of the program based on collages they will create. They will be created virtually using *Fotor Photo Collage*. This is what Ron Berger calls a Library of Excellence including the photographs they used to discuss in class, blogs and other conduits of expression. It is a way to showcase what they learned.

This collage will be a tangible exploration of their time spent in Israel. Using the photographs as a conversation opener the text that will be attached to each picture will be ideas the learners were able to articulate after they return from their trip. The outcome is to have the learners find their place in Israel that hopefully will lead to a deeper connection to their Jewish identity. This 8-week experience will help the learner express and unpack what they learned and where they will see themselves in the future.

## Themes & Core Concepts

### Conversation

- Fostering conversation among learners who have had a similar experience in Israel creates a community that engages connection to Israel's narrative and the greater Jewish narrative.
- Storytelling about Israel allows for a more diverse and richer conversation with others regarding Israel.

### Human Dignity

- Exploring different examples of human freedom, teaches us about the important role freedom plays in our own lives.

### Humility

- Engaging in *tikkun olam*, social justice work is a fundamental Jewish value that enriches in our communities.

### Taste

- Tasting different Israeli wines is a conduit to learning about Jewish ritual and Israel's agriculture.
- Shabbat is an attainable Jewish ritual that I can make a part of my weekly practice.

### Spirituality

- Analyzing the various spiritual moments that one has in Israel helps think about how to replicate these experiences at home

### Land

- A rich understanding of Jewish experience in Eretz Yisrael only comes from an analysis of the many historical periods in which the Jewish people lived here.
- A nuanced and honest approach to confronting Israel's major challenges enhances our connections.

### My Israel

- The process of unpacking my Birthright experience with other alumni gives new meaning to that experience and helps to foster a continued and ongoing relationship with Israel.

# Conversation

## Core Concepts:

- Fostering conversation among learners who have had a similar experience in Israel creates a community that engages connection to Israel's narrative and the greater Jewish narrative.
- Storytelling about Israel allows for a more diverse and richer conversation with others regarding Israel.

## Essential Question:

- How did my experience in Israel change my life?
- What do I want to unpack about my experience?
- Where did I find parallels between Jewish life in Israel and America? Where did I find differences?
- How do my relationships with others further connect me to Israel?

## Objectives

- Peers from the same city will be able to engage in deep conversation about their Israel experience and in what ways it affects their lives today.
- Learners will begin to explore different tangible ways in which conversation about Israel can take place using photography, memory, writing or drawing.
- Talking about Israel with people who have had similar experiences in Israel creates opportunity to explore personal and shared connections to Israel and the greater Jewish narrative

## **Program Outline (75 minutes)**

### **Email Sent Out to Participants Prior to their First Class:**

Dear *chaverim* (friends),

We are so excited to have you join our first get together next week, \_\_\_*date*\_\_\_! We are eager to get to know all of you and hope you're excited as well. Our time spent together will help us get to know each other and have deep conversations that we hope you will find meaningful and inspiring.

For our first class, we ask that you bring a photograph that you took on your Birthright trip that represents what *conversation* means or looks like to you. Please feel free to interpret *conversation* however you want. You may bring the picture in printed or digital form. If it is in digital form please send the photograph prior to your arrival at: ydadoun@futurepic.com.

Looking forward to meeting you all,

Yael Dadoun  
Picture the Future

### **Set Induction (15 minutes):** **Building Community**

This set induction is meant to allow the learners to get to know one another. It is meant to create comfortable space where people can get to know each other in a safe setting. Each session is meant to allow the participants to get to know each other a little bit better in hopes of creating a community that is based on friendships that meet each other during the course as well as outside of the time they spend together.

### **LISTEN UP!**

- For this game, participants will partner up. They will sit in front one another in chairs.
- In this exercise learners will practice listening to one another.
- One of the participants will speak for 3 minutes answering the following questions:
  - Tell your partner about a conversation you had on your trip that you think you will never forget.
  - Why was it so interesting to you?
  - What stuck out?
- As the learner speaks, the partner must listen silently without responding or asking clarifying questions. They are just listening.

- At the end of the 3 minutes the partners will switch roles.
- When both played the talking and listening role they will share each other's story to the group.

### **Discussion and Articulation (45 minutes):**

#### **PICTURE PRESENTATION:**

- Participants will sit in groups of 5 spread out around the room. They will each have approximately 3 minutes to describe the picture they brought in which represents "*conversation.*" They will have the opportunity to answer these 3 questions in the process:
  1. *What's going on in the photo?*
  2. *What is the conversation behind this picture?*
  3. *What were you thinking at the time you took this photo?*
  4. *What is the conversation you would like to have about this photograph now?*

#### **WORD CLOUD:**

- In the same groups, participants will look at their photograph again and describe to their group members what in the photograph is:
  - Subjective: Based on one's personal opinion.
  - Objective: Reviews many points of view. It is meant to be unbiased.
- Each learner will choose two words that describe how their photograph representing conversation is subjective and two other words they chose to describe the objective parts of the photograph.
- After the learners choose their words the facilitator will make two separate word clouds out of the participants' words. The idea is that the more subjective word cloud will have more varying words while the objective word cloud will include the word "people" the most. This will illustrate that the most important part of having conversation is the people involved.

#### **QUOTE:**

- The facilitator will introduce the following quote:
  - **Deuteronomy 30:12**

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talk about their trip using the photograph they brought, the words they chose, the word cloud or any other personal story they want to share. These sample questions can be used to get the conversation going:

- [Based on the word cloud and their conversation] what similar experiences did you have with other participants?
- What was unique about your experience?
- How did the conversations you had in Israel influence or inform your conversations today?
- What elements of your conversations today most helped you get to know others?
  - How does this compare with your use of conversation in Israel?

Materials:

- Tables
- Chairs
- Computer
- Projector

# **Humility:**

## **Core Concepts:**

- Engaging in *tikkun olam*, social justice work is a fundamental Jewish value that enriches in our communities.

## **Essential Question:**

- What role does humility play in my life?
- Which experiences in Israel taught me about humility?
- What does humility mean to me? What does it mean for the greater Jewish community?
- How do my relationships with others further connect me to Israel?

## **Objectives**

- Peers from the same city will engage in *tikkun olam*, social justice work as a fundamental Jewish value and it's important effects today.
- Learners will explore the delicate balance of humility and self-confidence in Israel and the United States.
- Learners will link biblical texts to today's society by giving back to the community they live in.

## **Program Outline (75 minutes)**

This particular lesson will take place ideally during a 1.5 hour break in the middle of full day volunteering at the project site. This particular program can take place during the lunch period if need be. This program can take place outside or inside depending on the project that the participants are working on.

### **Set Induction:**

As participants walk into the area where they will be doing the program they will each receive a two small pieces of paper that are folded up. They will be asked to place each note in different pockets (if they have no pockets they can put each note in their shoe or find another alternative). Each piece of paper will read the following:

- “I am but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27)
- “The world was created for me” (Mishna Sanhedrin)
- The participants will be instructed not to look at the notes for now.

### **SHARING OF PHOTOS (15 minutes):**

- Participants will be asked to get into small groups of four with individuals they haven’t spoken during their work day as a way of speaking to other people.
- The participants will use this time to share the photo they brought which represents “humility” to him or her. Below are prompting questions to help the conversation started for sharing (these questions can be created by the group as a whole or can be already be written on a large piece of paper brought by the facilitator):
  - How does your photograph represent “humility?”
  - How is this photograph unique to Israel?
  - Why did you initially take this photograph? Does it evoke different emotions today?
- When I asked people to bring in pictures about humility some of the pictures included: those from the Kotel (use humility when deciding who should stand where and who has the right to be there), homeless people in Israel and protests from Kikar Rabin. The photographs can really vary when presenting humility.

### **Discussion and Articulation (45 minutes):**

In this segment, participants will have the opportunity to read and learn about the story of Naomi and Ruth and see how the contemporary photographer Adi Nes interprets the story. The idea behind this section is to make connections to the biblical story and how it is interpreted by a modern day Israeli photographer. The facilitator will hand out the story to everyone in the group. Assuming they remain outside each participant will read the story either in *chevruta* or as a big group. When they finish the story they will answer the questions listed below.

## Story of Naomi & Ruth<sup>1</sup>:

Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, leave Bethlehem in Judah with their sons to live in Moab. Once there, Naomi's husband dies, and her two sons get married. The two sons also die after ten years, leaving Naomi alone with her two daughters-in-law – Ruth and Orpah. Naomi decides to leave Moab with her daughters-in-law after hearing that the famine in Judah is over, but on the way tells them that they do not need to go with her and that they should start new lives of their own. She describes how her life holds nothing for them because she has no more sons to give them. Her situation is helpless. The text states: "Turn back my daughters, for I am too old to be married. ... Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of the Lord has struck out against me" (Ruth 1:12-13). After this, Orpah agrees to leave, but Ruth remains with Naomi saying, **"For wherever you go, I will go, wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God"** (Ruth 1:16). Ruth and Naomi continue to Bethlehem, and when they arrive at the beginning of the barley harvest, Naomi changes her name to Mara, meaning bitterness, because, she says, "the Lord has dealt harshly with me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me" (Ruth 1:21). Ruth goes to glean among the ears of grain, and it turns out she is doing so on land belonging to Boaz, a relative of Naomi. Boaz asks about the stranger working on his field. When he finds out who she is he tells her to remain on his fields where she will be protected and fed. Boaz knows what Ruth has done for Naomi and praises her, saying, "May you have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge" (Ruth 2:12). When Ruth arrives back to Naomi, she learns that Naomi and Boaz are related, and Naomi tells her to continue working for him. After some time working on Boaz's field, Naomi tells Ruth to lie at his feet after he has eaten. He is honored by Ruth's kindness saying, "Be blessed of the lord, daughter! Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, in that you have not turned to younger men, whether poor or rich" (Ruth 3:10). In exchange for Ruth's kindness and care, he acquires the land that Naomi's husband Elimelech had owned (following the custom by receiving a sandal from the redeemer), and thus, according to custom at the time, acquires all that belonged to Elimelech and his sons and makes Ruth his new wife. Boaz and Ruth live together and have a son, of whom the women say to Naomi, "He will renew your life and sustain your old age; for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons" (Ruth 4:15). The child is named Obed and Naomi serves as his foster mother. Obed is the grandfather of King David.

### Prompting Questions:

- What stands out to you in this story?
- What values does Naomi possess in this story? Ruth?
- What obligation does Ruth have to Naomi?
- If you were Ruth in this story would you do the same? What would you do differently?

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<sup>1</sup> *Tanakh: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985. Print.

### Interpretation of the text:

In this segment, participants will look at the actions of Naomi and Ruth and how they both showed humility towards each other. Naomi acted with humility when her sons died. She wanted Ruth to go on with out her and start fresh. However, Ruth did not abandon her mother-in-law. Ruth exercised humility when she followed Naomi and cared for her because she was an elder in her family (through her husband). This section is meant to show how both women acted humbly towards each other. Both women have a desire to make the other happy which requires humility from the self first.

The facilitator will read this next section out loud to the participants introducing them to Adi Nes. This Israeli photographer brings to life Jewish text in Israel today. In this way, the participants will see that just as they use photography to describe their ideas and feelings so do Israelis not only as a form of art but also a statement about society today.

### Introduction to Adi Nes:

Adi Nes is an Israeli photographer born in Kiryat Gat in 1966. Born to Iranian parents he majored in photography in college. In 2006, he created the “Bible Series” using staged scenes in the modern state of Israel that are based on biblical stories. The characters in these photos are “homeless anti-heroes in the lower class of Israeli society who have lost their dignity.” (Kogan)

### Adi Nes: *Ruth and Naomi*

In this next segment the facilitator will hand out a copy of the photograph or have a larger one printed out to pass around to the participants. The participants will be asked to describe what they see in the photograph and compare it to the story they just read. Some prompting questions for this segment may include:

- What do you see in this photograph?
- What do you think Adi Nes was trying to capture here?
- How does it compare to how you imagined the story?
- What ideas or values is Adi Nes trying to capture in his photograph?
- How does Nes' idea of humility compare to your photograph?

Interpretation of the photograph to help lead conversation:

In this photograph titled *Ruth and Naomi*, Adi Nes depicts Naomi advising Ruth on how to win the affection of Boaz. The viewer can feel Naomi's pain both physically and emotionally. She appears thin, her skin is wrinkled and aged, and she looks exhausted (though thoughtful). This is probably the depiction of "Mara," the woman Naomi becomes when she is made bitter by her difficult circumstances. Ruth is shown with her shoes cast aside and her feet are bare on the dirt ground. This probably represents a few things: first of all, it shows the viewer that Ruth has just come home, and has probably taken off her shoes off after a long day on her feet. Secondly, the bodies of the two women overlap; their knees touch which may lead the viewer to believe that Ruth is deeply committed to Naomi. Nes' work is modern day commentary that employs biblical motifs. In this photograph, I see him portraying the essential element of humility- putting ourselves aside in order to take care of those who need our help. In this photograph we see Naomi and Ruth appearing to still take care of each other. Yet, no one seems to be caring for them. We need to learn from these biblical women and remember that there are others in need. We must exercise our own humility at times and care for those who need our help.



### **Wrap-Up (15 minutes)**

As the conversation comes to an end use this wrap-up session as a way of making the connection between the Habitat for Humanity project and this lesson.

Using the quote below the facilitator will conclude the lesson. This quote is meant to represent the delicate balance between living our life exclusively for ourselves and taking care of each other. The whole idea behind doing this class while they are working with Habitat for Humanity is to show the importance of taking care of not only their immediate community but of all people. Additionally, participants will be reminded that as a part of their trip they participated



in a *tikkun olam* project. Once again, the delicate balance of going on a free trip to Israel but remembering to give back while they were there.

*“For wherever you go, I will go, wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).*

The last thing the participants will do as they get back to work is read the two sheets of paper that are in their pockets as a reminder of balance between being confident and still maintain enough humility to always help each other.

Materials:

- Two small sheets of paper with quotes for opening activity
- Copy of the story of Naomi and Ruth with questions
- Photograph of Naomi and Ruth by Adi Nes

# **Taste:**

## **Enduring Understandings:**

- Creating a culture of conversation for learners who have had a similar experience in Israel about different aspects of Judaism through the lens of Israel with others who have had similar experience creates a community that engages connection to Israel's narrative and the greater Jewish narrative.
- Storytelling about Israel allows for a more diverse and richer conversation with others regarding Israel.

## **Core Concepts:**

- Tasting different Israeli wines is a conduit to learning about Jewish ritual and Israel's agriculture.
- Shabbat is an attainable Jewish ritual that I can make a part of my weekly practice.

## **Essential Question:**

- What is unique about remembering something through taste or flavor?
- Which tastes or flavors are associated with Israel for you?
- What role or influence does taste have in a family or community?

## **Objectives**

- Participants will get together to create the unique "taste" of Shabbat by learning about wines from Israel.
- Learners will explore the effect in which taste has a lasting memory.
- Learners will make a connection between the blessing for the wine recited on Shabbat and other Jewish holidays with Israel's ancient and modern industry for making wine.

## **Program Outline (75 minutes)**

This program will take place on a Friday evening at a participants' house, a local synagogue or community center or anywhere else that can host a Shabbat dinner. Ideally, it should be a setting where conversation can be had comfortably and prayers can be recited out loud (a restaurant setting might be too distracting and loud and may take away from the Shabbat experience). Participants will have the opportunity to celebrate Shabbat by setting aside time to

be together. For some participants, Birthright was the first opportunity they were able to have a formal Shabbat dinner; for others it something they were familiar with. This lesson is particularly important for two reasons. The first being that after this 8-week program is over, Shabbat dinner is one easy and accessible way for them to continue their relationship. The second speaks to the idea of taking something as ancient as celebrating and setting aside time for Shabbat and making it something that speaks to the participants in a contemporary setting. At this Shabbat dinner, participants will have time to speak about their photo (as they do in other sessions), have dinner together, do the blessings and have an Israeli wine tasting experience. This kind of program merges several values together, spending time together, learning about Israel, having a dining experience and setting time aside to celebrate Shabbat. This program is meant to model the way in which they can continue their relationship in this new community together in the future.

The idea during this class is to give the participants a “taste” of what Shabbat is about. The class theme of taste does not only have to be about something we eat or drink but a conceptual taste. Some argue that Shabbat leaves a taste in our souls. The taste is meant to be one of rest, peace and love. During *havdalla* the separation between Shabbat and the rest of the week we smell the *besamim*, spices that are meant to linger in our minds during the week so we can remember the sweet flavor of Shabbat.

### **Set Induction:**

#### **OPENING CONVERSATION- SETTING THE TONE (10-15minutes):**

As participants gather around the table the facilitator will pose the following questions: These questions are meant to guide and set the tone for making Shabbat a holy time. If time allows, each participant can answer this question depending on the group.

- What was the Birthright shabbat experience like for you?
- What was most memorable about your Birthright Shabbat experience?
- In the experience(s) you've had, what is most valuable to you about setting time aside to observe Shabbat?

#### SHARING OF PHOTOS (15 minutes):

During this segment, participants should sit around the table and share the photograph they brought using the following questions as a guide. Some participants may bring in photographs of them eating Israeli foods or drinking an Israeli drink that evokes a thought, memory or experience. Though some participants may interpret taste more metaphorically and will bring in a picture that represents the taste of a certain event or experience. In either case, the idea of taste is supposed to leave the participants with a, hopefully, positive memory and lingering for more. If a participant brings in something that has a negative or bad taste the questions below still apply. If they share that their picture represents something negative the facilitator can help them navigate a conversation which will lead to something more positive by asking questions like- *what would have made this a good experience? What did you learn from this experience?* Etc.

- What is being tasted in the photograph?
- Along with taste, are there other emotions or senses being used? What are they?
- What memories are you left with when thinking about this event, moment or flavor?

### **Discussion (35 minutes):**

In this next segment, participants will transition from looking at their photographs to tasting Israeli wines. The idea here is take an activity, like wine tasting, and connect it with Israel and have it be associated with the celebration of Shabbat. By learning about Israeli wines, participants will have the chance to merge their Jewish and secular lives while putting aside the time to get to know each other on the Jewish day of rest. The group will divide into five groups, probably those individuals sitting closest to them and receive a card with a region in Israel that produces wine. They are to read the short segment on the card in their small groups then present what's on the card to the rest of the table. The presentation can just be reiterated or for something more fun it can be acted out, drawn (if participants feel comfortable writing on Shabbat) or recreated in any creative way. The facilitator can hold up the map below to show where each region is in Israel as a visual. After each group has presented their card each participant at the table will have the opportunity to taste a wine from that region. For those individuals who do not drink alcohol should let their facilitator know. The participant and facilitator will decide what the best option for that individual is providing other non-alcoholic Israeli beverages to taste.

Prior to the tasting the facilitator will say a few words about wine used in Jewish practice. The following segment is the suggested reading.

Wine plays a great role in Jewish life and tradition as well. It is considered a holy drink – the only liquid that, before consuming, has its own special blessing. Wine is part of all life cycle events in Jewish life. It appears at weddings and circumcisions, high holidays, Shabbat and to make special moments when reciting the *shehechianu* prayer.

Wine is meant to inspire and comfort us, to lend dignity and importance to an occasion, to raise an ordinary or even extraordinary human event to a higher spiritual level. It is the blessing over the cup of wine that constitutes the *Kiddush* ceremony that ushers the holy Sabbath into our homes. We also conclude the Sabbath at *Havdalla* when we recite the prayer for wine along with other prayers.

For a wine to be certified kosher, as many Israeli wines are, a religious supervisor must oversee the process to ensure that no non-kosher tools or ingredients are used. Only rigorously observant Jews can handle equipment. Critics agree that these regulations don't affect the quality of wine. *Mevushal* wines with more stringent kosher requirements, are flash-pasteurized, and then rapidly chilled; this can affect quality. However, many top-tie Israeli wines today are non-Mevushal, or are unsupervised together. (Cabasin, 330).

Once all of the wines have been sampled, the group will choose one of the wines to use for the *kiddush*. Before they begin the facilitator should acknowledge the blessings done on Friday night by quoting Abraham Joshua Heschel that “Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the satisfaction of time” (Heschel 8). One of the participants from the group or the facilitator can lead the group in the following blessings:

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Blessing for lighting Shabbat candles:

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu  
b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel shabbat.*  
Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has  
sanctified us with commandments, and commanded us to light Shabbat  
candles.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר  
קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

Blessing over the wine:

*Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen.*  
Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the  
fruit of the vine.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,  
בורא פרי הגפן.

Blessing for the bread:

*Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam hamotzi lehem min  
ha'aretz.*  
Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth  
bread from the earth.<sup>2</sup>

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,  
המוציא לחם מן-הארץ.

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<sup>2</sup> Blessings from:

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Prayer/Blessings/shabbat\\_holidays.shtml#Wine](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Prayer/Blessings/shabbat_holidays.shtml#Wine)

## **Galilee Region**



The Galilee wine region is made up of the Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee and Golan Heights wineries. It runs north from Nazareth all the way to the Lebanese border where one can view a myriad of Israeli neighbors.

The Upper Galilee rises to 2,400 feet and the Golan reaches 3,600 feet. The high altitudes and the cooler climates are what make the Galilee Israel's finest growing region.

Most of the wineries use grapes from the Galilee for their First Label or Reserve Wines. This area has become Israel's premier wine region, characterized by high altitudes, cool breezes from Mount Hermon, volcanic basalt and 'tuff' soil of the Golan, and unique microclimates in the Upper Galilee, where the soils are heavy and gravelly, but well drained. The northernmost vineyards of the Golan Heights are 1,200 meters above sea level, with snowfalls during the winter.



## Shomron Region



Shomron, which includes the Mount Carmel and Sharon wineries, is the largest wine-growing region in Israel, running along the coast from south of Haifa down to Tel Aviv.

Four of the largest wineries in Israel are located in the Shomron region and an additional 40 wines are produced in this region including several ranked with four stars by Daniel Rogov, considered Israel's most influential and pre-eminent wine critic.

The main concentration of vineyards is in the valleys surrounding the winery towns of Zichron Yaakov, which houses one of Carmel's wineries and Tishbi winery, and Binyamina, home of Binyamina winery. Soils are medium-heavy and limey, and the climate is typically Mediterranean, with warm summers and cool, relatively humid winters. This is the area where Baron Edmond de Rothschild, founder of the modern Israel wine industry, first cultivated French varieties in 1882. He invested a tremendous amount to revive the wine business in Israel. Prior to that, wines had been made for thousands of years here, in the center of the biblical Kingdom of Israel.

## **Samson Region**



The Samson region, including the Central Coast Plains and the Judean Plains wineries, is south and east of Tel Aviv. Although the Samson wine region is considered the second largest in Israel, the wineries are located in a fairly compact area. The central coastal plain (Dan) and the rolling hills of the Judean Lowlands make up this region. Whereas the Galilee, Shomron and Judean Hills regions are historical places that have borne their names since biblical times, the Samson region is named after the well-known biblical hero, Samson.

The Dan sub-area occupies the coastal plains around Rishon Lezion and Rehovot; the second sub-area encompasses the rolling hills around Latrun and Adulam. This area produces over 50 different wines. The area around the Judean foothills is the fastest growing region in terms of newly planted vineyards and start-up wineries.

The region was named for the biblical character, Samson, because this is where he lived, traveling the same gentle slopes and wide valleys, experiencing the same Mediterranean climate, with its hot, humid summers and warm, mild winters.

Many of Carmel and Barkan's vineyards are in the Samson region; Carmel's main winery is situated in Rishon Lezion and that of Segal Winery is in Ramle. The soils of this region are lime, stone, clay and loam with a coastal Mediterranean climate -- warm, humid summers and mild winters.

## **Judean Hills Region**



The Judean Hills wineries are spread out around the city of Jerusalem. Summer temperatures heat up the Judean Hills, but the nights cool off quickly, allowing grapes to develop flavors that translate into wines that taste anything but baked. Many of the vineyards are grown on terraces or in narrow valleys. There are small areas of vineyards north of Jerusalem, with the region extending to Yatir, south of Hebron. The boutique winery Castel is situated at Ramat Raziel, and Efrat is located at Motza, near the entrance to Jerusalem. The soils are thin, limey and stony. The climate varies from arid to Mediterranean.

## Negev Region



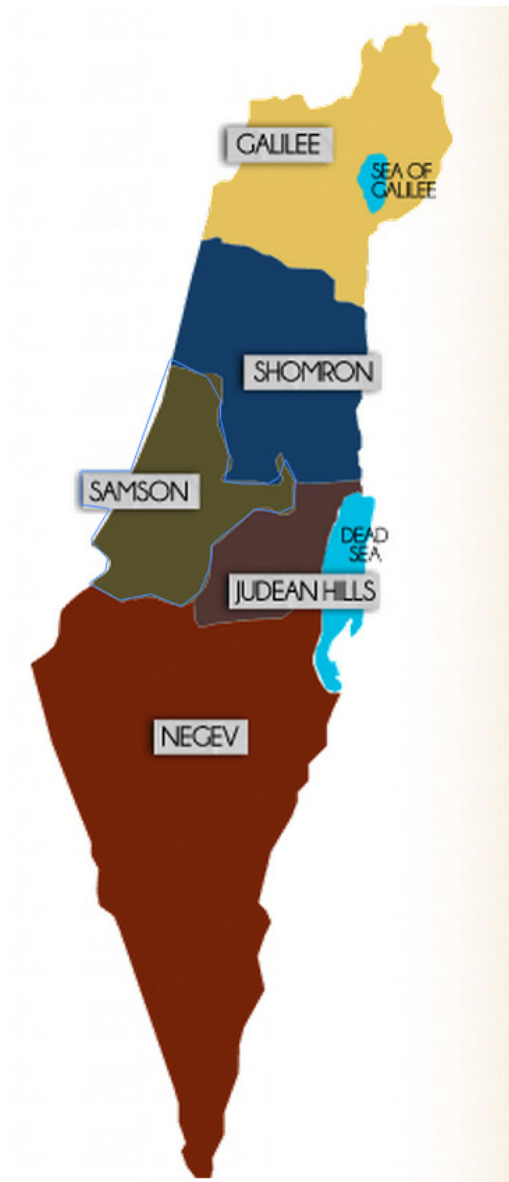
Growing wine in the desert area seems like almost an impossible task. The Negev makes up most of Israel's land, few plants can grow in this arid, desert region with its heat and dryness and salty water. The soil is sandy and dusty and the temperatures range from very hot during the day, to cold at night. Vineyards are often shrouded in mists during the morning hours and flash flooding can occur in winter.

Israel has created advanced agro technologies to help them plant commercial quantities of top quality grapes using drip method watering and a long process of identifying suitable cross breeds. Even with the odds against them, vintners in this region produce over 30 different wines.

Israelis have made something from what seems like nothing, creating towns and industry in this part of their state. The grapes are also unique in this region. The Nabateans raised grapes here about 1,500 years ago. Back then, as today, the dryness helped prevent disease and mildew. This also intensifies the flavor and color of the grapes. The cloudless skies of the Negev are also an advantage, allowing the sunlight to flow to the grapes' skins, which produces the wines' unique flavors.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Information on wine regions acquired from: Published by Yael (Zisling) Adar  
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Photos from: <http://winesacrossisrael.com/home.html>

### **Wrap-Up (10 minutes)**

As a wrap-up the participants will look at a quote from Abraham Joshua Heschel's book, *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man* and discuss the questions below. The idea here to make a connection between their experiences in Israel and how it might influence their celebration of Shabbat in the future. Our tradition calls for wine to be a part of our religious ceremony and even with modern technologies we still continue to abide by the same laws of preparing wine. It is a part of ancient Jewish culture as well as modern Israeli culture.

*The idea of the Sabbath as a bride was retained by Israel; it is the theme of the hymn Lechah Dodi chanted in the synagogue. Even the sanctification over wine was explained with the idea that, just as the wedding ceremony is performed over a cup of wine, so Sabbath is "the bride that enters the hupah." To this day the meal on Saturday night is called "the escort of the queen" (Heschel, 61).*

- What is this quote saying?
- Why do you think Heschel compares Shabbat to ushering in a bride?
- How was your experience of Shabbat in Israel, did it, in fact, feel like ushering in a bride?
- What might a shabbat celebration look like for you in the future?

#### **Materials:**

- Sheet with Shabbat blessings on them
- One copy of each region in Israel to hand out to the small groups
- One bottle of wine from each region listed above
- Arrangements for a Shabbat dinner

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